

**Age Action Alliance  
Loneliness and Isolation Working Group  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2014  
Age UK  
1.30 pm – 4.00 pm**

**Note of meeting**

**Attendance:**

Shelagh Marshall, Chair	Future Years
Jeremy Sharpe	Link Visiting Scheme
Nicola Venus-Balgobin	Sense
Marc Mordey	Vintage Communities/Alcohol Concern Cymru
Jonathan Whitehead	Age UK
Phil Rossall	Age UK
Kate Jopling	Policy and Strategy Consultant
Sophie Andrews	The Silverline
Angela Cairns	Community Network
Margaret Clarke	SEEFA
Cherry Bushell	NBFA Assisting the Elderly
Karen Ferris	Hampshire CC
Sue Arthur	Independent Age
Léa Renoux	Age UK
Catherine McClen	Buddy Hub
Helen Dimmock	DWP

**Apologies:**

Peter Frakes	East Midlands Later Life Forum
Laura Ferguson	Campaign to End Loneliness
Alex Ingram	My Ageing Parent
Marjory Broughton	SEEFA
Viv Gee	NW Age Action Alliance
Claire Miller	LinkAgeBristol
Russell Cowan	LinkAgeBristol
Karl Demian	Royal Voluntary Service
Janet Whitehouse	U3A
Jason Bergen	Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Saskia Goldman	Friends of the Elderly
Jon Eastwood	Big Lottery Fund

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Shelagh welcomed everyone to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.

**2. Update on actions from previous meeting**

- All members to consider suitable resources to upload - **ongoing**.
- Jonny to share findings of loneliness research when available – **on the agenda of this meeting**
- Helen to finalise the report and circulate it – **cleared**
- Helen to circulate the reports and presentations - **cleared**
- Deborah to send an item for the members weekly update – **carried forward**

### **3.Loneliness prediction statistics – Phil Rossall**

Using the English Longitudinal Study on Ageing they have analysed statistics to identify themes related to the risk of an older person being lonely. This showed that poor health was strongly associated with the risk of loneliness as was being recently widowed. Eye conditions were also linked but deafness was not although this might be for contextual reasons. There were a lot of issues that were not significant such as whether a house was sited in a rural or urban area. Firstly they looked at Local Authority results. There were some gaps where not enough people were surveyed in an area for the results to be robust but this enabled them to show in which areas people were most likely to say they were lonely. Knowsley (28.11%) and then Castle Point (26.59%) were ranked first and second. Hart which is the most affluent and least deprived borough in England was number 10 in the list with 16.56% of people aged 65+ saying they were lonely. Rutland reported the lowest rate at 1.11% with the England average being 4%. The concentration of older people in the area was not a determinant factor so they looked at deprivation and discovered there was no link with this either.

As they wanted to look at statistics at as low a level as possible they considered middle super output areas (MSOA) of which there are 6,791 in England of size varying from 800 to 2,400 people aged 65+. They identified a large range of risk between neighbourhoods and a clear target group (the top quintile). The top 25 MSOAs for risk of loneliness included Liverpool (Toxteth) and Knowsley.

Their next steps are to:

- Sense check the results, comparing them with local knowledge and experience.
- Work with existing neighbourhood initiatives e.g. Age UKs, JRF.
- Develop scenarios based on cumulative risk.
- Look at the risk of loneliness at lower super output area and output area.
- Cluster analysis to identify the most at risk groups.

Phil welcomes queries, comments and suggestions at [phil.rossall@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:phil.rossall@ageuk.org.uk) The information will be firstly shared with their Age UK Partners and then published within the next few weeks.

### **4. Promising approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in later life – Kate Jopling**

The project was motivated by the number of areas around the country that had recognised loneliness was a problem but were saying they still didn't know what would work. There was limited evidence being trawled and re-trawled which failed to capture the complete picture. The aim was therefore to offer a more complete picture on activity and build a fuller evidence base. The project team decided to start in a different place - instead of going straight to the literature they began with an expert panel of people who could provide a balanced and wider view of what was working on the ground. Having identified approaches they then built a framework of what was out there and completed a literature review to recognise the whole spectrum of evidence, finishing by sourcing and gathering case studies.

The framework which identifies how the different approaches interact and link with each other is the key resource they want people to take from the report. A lot of the approaches experts described as most promising were holistic services which weren't framed as loneliness interventions, but were driven instead by agenda including prevention and integration for example. These had the ability to identify and reach people, giving them the opportunity to talk about their individual circumstances, so their particular needs could be identified and their loneliness addressed. Reaching, understanding and supporting people were therefore recognised as "Foundation Services". The ways in which things were done in the community such as neighbourhood approaches, asset based community development, volunteering and positive ageing

where designated as “Structural Enablers” as they were creating the environment for these and other approaches to operate.

Direct interventions were considered against three possible ways to address loneliness; developing existing relationships, making new connections or changing thinking about the individual’s current situation. The report has examples of services that are successfully addressing loneliness and there were lots of good examples that they couldn’t include as well as others that had not been sustained for a variety of reasons. There is still too little evaluation in general and still too little evaluation of the impact on loneliness specifically. A key message is that if a project believes it is tackling loneliness it should measure the impact it is having. The Campaign to End Loneliness is working on an impact evaluation tool for services.

The report is there to show services that are working so they can be replicated by others. The framework demonstrates how services work together, how to make this happen and warns against some key pitfalls - including, in particular, the vital importance of ensuring older people have good access to transport, and that technology is made accessible.

There are still some gaps about what we know works for certain groups such as ethnic minority groups, and those living in care homes for example.

The next steps are to encourage service providers to collaborate, evaluate and fill the gaps; to share with commissioners so they can replicate the promising approaches, provide services across the range and recognise loneliness as a core outcome. They also want to promote more and better research through commissioners, providers and researchers.

The area of psychological interventions was of interest to the group. These include, for example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Mindfulness which help people to think differently about their situations. Kate thought that Public Health England might be looking into this.

**AP: Helen to research whether PHE are proposing to do any work on psychological approaches to loneliness.**

## **5. The Silverline update – Sophie Andrews**

The Silverline is just over a year old now. Piloted originally in Manchester and the South West then extended over to Jersey, it launched nationally in December 2013 and they are now averaging 1200 calls a day to the helpline. They are pleased that 40% of callers are male as they are generally a hard to reach group. Predominantly those who call are living on their own. Many phone up and ask for information and advice but really are lonely and it is easier to ask for something specific than admit to being lonely. Some are calling several times a day at various trigger points. 67% are calling in the evenings and at weekends, saying they wouldn’t ring their family or the Samaritans as they don’t want to be a burden. They are seeing an increase in onward referrals to local and national agencies. The initial concerns from local agencies about how The Silverline might replace them or affect their funding have not been realised and now in some places the concern is that they are identifying too much demand for services.

They have 1200 volunteers with another 1000 on their waiting list and 1000 people waiting for a weekly phone call. 2000 volunteers will be up and running by the end of March. Some of these are lonely themselves and the Silverline have set themselves a target of converting 5% of their callers into volunteers.

Silver Circles are group chats which can be amongst people with similar interests who can speak about things that others don’t easily understand or identify with.

They are working with Action on Hearing Loss to start Silver Letters where they will not be using technology but writing letters. They are also starting a six month pilot with a Gujarati speaker to look at how they can reach into ethnic communities.

Their main challenge going forward is funding as their business model is expensive. They hope that some of the roles will be taken up by volunteers but night staff will probably always have to be paid and this is an important aspect of the service.

Centre for Social Justice evaluated the pilot which is available [here](#) and Anglia Ruskin University are doing an evaluation that will be published in October.

## **6. Alliance update –Helen**

Membership has now grown to 729. Activity going on in other groups included production of the Fuel Poverty Action Guide which Helen shared copies of and asked members to contact her if they would like more. A video presentation on First Contact Schemes has been produced by the Excluded Groups working group – more information [here](#). She mentioned that the Digital Inclusion Group was working with DCLG to develop their Grey Cells framework.

One of the Alliance members, Newton and Bywell Connects, has developed a Pinterest site for the Alliance which you can view [here](#). Members were encouraged to follow the boards and to suggest items for inclusion.

Helen asked members to share good news stories or new connections arising from their membership of the Alliance with her for inclusion in the evaluation report which is being developed.

## **7. Member update – All**

Shelagh reported that the BBC had commissioned a documentary to be made on Loneliness and not focussing only on the older generation. The film will be screened in December. She mentioned a meeting she had with the researcher who was planning the content of the documentary. She will keep the group informed of progress with this.

Karen explained about the Damaris Trust event she had attended last night which was a screening of the Second Most Exotic Marigold Hotel. This was a community event to raise funds for local older peoples charities and also focused on the issue of loneliness.

Sense have published “Enjoy Life” a resource for older people who acquire sight loss later in life including a version working with people from South East Asia. They have also been working with professionals to raise awareness of social prescribing. This year they will be launching a campaign on Friendships.

Independent Age are a national charity providing advice and information with particular experience in social care. They have a series of guides on their website and a network of volunteers who phone and visit people at home. Having undertaken a strategic review they will be looking at the services they deliver and opportunities to collaborate. Last year they published a report with ILC-UK on [Isolation: the emerging crisis for older men](#).

SEEFa recently ran a symposium on digital inclusion in the House of Lords which was hosted by Lord Filkin. The report will be available soon. They have also been working with the Local Government Association who have a task and finish group looking at the impact of the ageing society on local government.

Community Network are running several telephone befriending groups including one for seaman. They are currently evaluating their training.

Link visiting are working with church groups to set up befriending groups around the country most recently in Dorset and North Yorkshire with another 15 planned for this year. They are looking to work with local groups and not duplicate or replicate existing services.

Age UK mentioned their “No-one should have no-one” and general election campaigns.

Catherine is working to set up her social enterprise “Buddyhub”.

Marc invited contributions to the “Working with Older People” publication that they are on the editorial board for. He is working in Wales which is aiming to be an age-friendly country. Having looked at the age-friendly indicators with older people they have said that how they connect with older people is important. He will report back on this further at a future meeting.

NBFA Assisting the Elderly said are looking to move away from the friendship breaks they are running which are time intensive and do not have as lasting an impact as they would like. Cherry will circulate a request for input from group members,

## **8. Next steps**

Shelagh asked members to think about the next project the group could take on and how the expertise contained in the group could be shared. She also encouraged the group to write blogs for the website.

AP: Members to consider next project for the group.

AP: Members to consider how the groups expertise can be shared.

### **Summary of action points:**

1. Helen to research whether PHE are proposing to do any work on psychological approaches to loneliness.
2. Members to consider next project for the group.
3. Members to consider how the groups expertise can be shared.

Meeting ended at 4.05 pm

### **Next meeting:**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2015
- 15<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015